

findings are not limited to our domestic agencies. As I said at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's first-ever DEIA hearing convened last year, between 2002 and 2021, the overall proportion of Black employees at the State Department decreased from 17 percent to 15 percent. At the time of our hearing, there were only four career Black Ambassadors serving abroad.

This failure to harness America's diverse talent pool is not only a grave error, but it also places us at a significant disadvantage when we seek to engage our allies and counter our adversaries on the world stage.

That is why, as the highest ranking Latino in the U.S. Congress and the first chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee of Latino descent, one of my top priorities has been to promote and expand diversity in our domestic and international affairs agencies, including in our most senior levels.

That is why I introduced diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility—DEIA—provisions as part of last year's State Department authorization bill, which passed as part of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2023. And, why it is so important to support paid internship programs and fellowships in Congress, the State Department, USAID, Peace Corps, and all of our international affairs agencies. Because without these opportunities, many students of color would be unable to afford to come work in Washington, DC.

Our diversity continues to be our Nation's greatest source of strength, and we must act on this moral and strategic imperative to cultivate a representative workforce, because, in every single world crisis that the United States faces, a more diverse and more representative U.S. diplomatic corps would be a valuable asset.

A few years ago, when I was traveling in China, the diplomat in charge of democracy and human rights programs at our Embassy had participated in the civil rights struggle. His personal history, his personal eyewitness accounts of trying to change the course of events in our country as an African American man, were a powerful example to those fighting for democracy and human rights in China. I can recount easily dozens of moments in different parts of the world where Americans from diverse backgrounds have made a powerful case for our country. These life experiences cannot be replicated, they cannot be purchased, and they cannot be bought.

So, as Black History Month comes to a close, let us not only remember the critical contributions of African-Americans in the formulation and execution of U.S. foreign policy, let us also recommit to doing our part to prepare the leaders who will strengthen and secure our national security in the future.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO ZACHARY HORTON

• Mr. OSSOFF. Mr. President, I rise today to commend Zachary Horton of Warner Robins, GA, for the inspiring success of his pecan business, the Blind Squirrel Nut Company.

Mr. Horton's story demonstrates that optimism and resilience can lead to amazing achievements. The Blind Squirrel Nut Company was born out of Zachary's entrepreneurial spirit after he was diagnosed with a medical condition that caused him to lose his vision. Mr. Horton's self-confidence and determination empowered him to launch a pecan business that has served customers across middle Georgia for over a year. The Blind Squirrel Nut Company also offers a variety of products to customers nationwide, giving Americans across the country a taste of Georgia's unique pecans.

As Georgia's U.S. Senator, I recognize and commend Mr. Zachary Horton as a champion who against all odds has been able to fulfill his greatest dream thanks to his perseverance, passion, and hope.●

TRIBUTE TO PASTOR ANGEL MAESTRE

• Mr. OSSOFF. Mr. President, I rise today to commend Pastor Angel Maestre for his impact on Augusta's Hispanic community.

Pastor Angel Maestre is a beacon of Georgia, serving as the head pastor at Oasis Augusta Iglesia for the last 18 years. Over the course of his tenure, Pastor Maestre has worked to uplift the community through his countless years of mentorship, selfless acts, and service. Pastor Maestre has also founded the first Hispanic radio station in Augusta to better connect the community and inform residents of news impacting their neighborhood. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Pastor Maestre helped inform the Hispanic community about vaccinations through his show, ensuring the community was well informed and staying healthy.

As Georgia's U.S. Senator, I commend and recognize Pastor Angel Maestre for his dedication to Georgia and the Augusta community.●

TRIBUTE TO CAROLYN MCKINLEY

• Mr. OSSOFF. Mr. President, I rise today to commend Ms. Carolyn McKinley for her leadership as executive director of the Meriwether County Chamber of Commerce.

As chamber executive director, Ms. McKinley was instrumental in working with the Flint River Trail, Meriwether County, and representatives from 18 riverfront counties to create more outdoor recreation opportunities, which will lead to economic development opportunities in southwest Georgia. During last year's Georgia Governor's

tourism conference in Athens, McKinley accepted the Georgia River Network's 2022 Water Trail Hero Award on behalf of the Flint River Water Trail group. This award honors the partnership between the Flint River Water Trail and Meriwether County leaders to boost tourism and economic development along Georgia's more than 2,500 river miles.

As Georgia's U.S. Senator, I recognize and commend Carolyn McKinley's leadership as executive director of the Meriwether County Chamber of Commerce and for her commitment to economic development in southwest Georgia.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:33 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 538. An act to require the disclosure of a camera or recording capability in certain internet-connected devices.

H.R. 1059. An act to authorize notaries public to perform, and to establish minimum standards for, electronic notarizations and remote notarizations that occur in or affect interstate commerce, to require any Federal court to recognize notarizations performed by a notarial officer of any State, to require any State to recognize notarizations performed by a notarial officer of any other State when the notarization was performed under or relates to a public Act, record, or judicial proceeding of the notarial officer's State or when the notarization occurs in or affects interstate commerce, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1108. An act to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to extend the authority of the Federal Communications Commission to grant a license or construction permit through a system of competitive bidding.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 538. An act to require the disclosure of a camera or recording capability in certain internet-connected devices; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

H.R. 1059. An act to authorize notaries public to perform, and to establish minimum standards for, electronic notarizations and remote notarizations that occur in or affect interstate commerce, to require any Federal court to recognize notarizations performed by a notarial officer of any State, to require any State to recognize notarizations performed by a notarial officer of any other State when the notarization was performed under or relates to a public Act, record, or judicial proceeding of the notarial officer's State or when the notarization occurs in or affects interstate commerce, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the second time, and placed on the calendar: